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ABSTRACT

This paper includes tips on managing time and controlling anxiety for adults who want to go to college. The paper encourages adults to take the step of going to college and reminds them of the benefits of an education. Suggestions include the following: planning, preparing the family, thinking about priorities, knowing what to expect to gain from an education, how to approach studying, finding financial aid, and sources for special help for adult students and single parents. (KC)

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Thinking About More Education?

A Guide for Adults Who Want to Go to College

If you are thinking about going back to college, it is normal to be a little nervous and to have a lot of questions. Here are some questions you may be asking yourself. The answers to ease your mind follow.

Do you feel old and afraid you can't learn as much as you will need to?

Old dogs CAN learn new tricks! Many adults feel they would be at a disadvantage if they went to college. They feel they wouldn't be able to learn as well as young people. This is not true. Adults can do very well in college, and more and more of them are doing just that.

Do you think you won't be able to keep up with the younger students in your classes?

Are you afraid you can't think intelligently any more?

Don't worry about your age. Adult learners are ahead of the game. *Is My Mind Slipping?*, written by the Andrus Gerontology Center of the University of Southern California, says: "Let's get the facts straight right now: barring an illness, you can expect your mind to stay strong and healthy well past the age of 80. You will be able to learn, to think, to remember, to enjoy."

Are you uncomfortable thinking that you will be the only older student in your classes?

Many students are adults. You won't be the only one. The National Center for Education Statistics reports that half of the students in education after high school are 25 years of age or older. By 2000, they predict that students 25 or older will outnumber those younger than 25.

Adults have an advantage. You have real-life, practical experience at home, at work, and in the community. You have lived through parts of history that your classmates have only read about. You have experienced the difficulties of trying to solve tangled social issues. You are already a step ahead. Younger students will come to YOU for help. They are likely to recognize and value your experience.

Have you spent years as a housewife and mother?

Do you think men who have worked are more likely to succeed in college than women who have spent time with children?

Adult women can succeed in college. As a matter of fact, they can be so successful that there are more adult women than adult men going to college.

Do you think you will miss out on things at college if you go part time instead of full time?

There are many part-time students. As a matter of fact, there are more part-time adult students than there are full-time adult students. Even if you aren't at college as much as other students, you can still do well. And you can still stayed plugged in to things going on at college by keeping in touch with your academic adviser and other students in your classes.

Are you not sure if you will have enough time to study?

There are a lot of demands on your time from family, work, and other interests. Learning to balance them all with college won't always be easy. It may require spending less time watching television or cleaning house. But if education is important to you, you will be able to make the time for it and you will be glad you did.

Check out the next pages for tips on managing your time and controlling your anxiety

tips on managing your time and controlling your anxiety

You can do it! When we try something different and new, we tend to worry and become anxious. Anxiety is normal. Feeling like you don't have enough time can cause anxiety. The tips below can help you control anxiety. Many of them will help you juggle college with all the other things you need to do.

Plan carefully.

This will help you succeed. Adults who go to college usually feel very busy and have a lot they need to get done in a day. If you plan carefully, so that you avoid wasting time, you are more likely to find the time you need to finish everything.

Prepare your family.

Everyone's life will change when you go to college. Just as you are concerned about the change, expect your family to be concerned, too. Each member of the family will have to take on more responsibility and learn tasks you used to do. They may find this difficult. REMEMBER: This responsibility is good for them. It helps them grow.

Think about your priorities.

If you go to college, you may find yourself dividing your time between child care, homework, housework, yardwork, and sharing time with significant others. This can be too much. You may accomplish none of these satisfactorily. You may need to make choices about what is most important, at what time. When you have critical assignments, let the lawn and house go. When you have a mid-semester break, go on a cleaning binge. Only you can decide your priorities, but as a student, you may prefer dust to a D.

Know what you expect to gain from more education.

If you have a firm idea of the benefits you hope to receive from your hard work, you are more likely to continue working hard. Be sure you *know why more education is important to you.* Some reasons that adults have for getting more education are:

- career advancement
- career change
- increased likelihood of career success
- increased confidence
- increased earning potential

Benefits of Education

What can you gain from education? Below are advantages some adults see to more education.

Income and career.
More education can help you improve your job situation. For example, education can help you:

- qualify for a specific career and make you more employable overall,
- upgrade your qualifications in your present career, making you a better candidate for promotions, and
- develop capabilities that can increase your income.

Skill Development.
More education can help you develop specific skills in a wide variety of areas, from bookkeeping to computers.

Personal Development.
Education can help you grow just as it helps children grow. You can develop greater intellectual abilities, gain cultural knowledge, and learn on your own as well as in classes.

Greater Understanding.
Education can help you gain insight into and knowledge about subjects that interest you. It can help you explore profound issues such as religion, philosophy, or world peace.

Personal Enjoyment.
Education can help you better understand and enjoy the arts, such as sculpture, music, painting, theater, and literature. It can help you investigate areas of thought such as mathematics, history, literature, and the culture of another country.

Steps to Success

What problems do adults have when going to college? Most adult students have trouble finding the time and money needed to succeed at college, home, and job. Many also lack confidence when they start college. These steps will help you get off to a good start. For more help, call the Hotline and ask for **IS-13**: Get A Good Start in College.

1. Start off strong.
Initial success can be a problem. But you can do anything with a little preparation and a lot of work. You may have to:

- redevelop your study skills;
- learn word processing skills on computers;
- learn how to cope with all your responsibilities;
- relearn test-taking strategies; and
- learn how to use electronic library resources.

2. Ask for help.
Talk to instructors, advisors, librarians, and the Hotline. One good source of help is at student orientation. Go and ask questions. Take notes of what might help you.

3. Make study time.
It's hard to find the time to study, get to class, take care of family responsibilities, and fulfill your professional obligations. If you have a family, study time can be particularly difficult to find. Your family may be used to having you on call. Before you begin classes, sit down with your family and:

- identify a place that will be considered off-limits;
- identify blocks of time when you will be studying; and
- ask for no disturbances, so you can concentrate

4. Organize.
If you organize and plan your time well, you are more likely to succeed as a student. Try making a daily or weekly schedule. Use a calendar, planner, or whatever is best for you.

5. Plan for your transportation.
Make sure you can you get to classes, the library, or lab when you need to go without spending too much time or energy. Try car pooling or using mass transit. Use your traveling time for study if you can.

6. Prepare for the unexpected.
Make sure you know how you will handle the unexpected. From lost house keys to a week of chicken pox, make plans before the emergency.

7. Find financial aid.
Money to pay for tuition, child care, books, equipment, classes, parking, and transportation can be hard to find. Some places to look for financial aid include:

- **Your employer**. Some companies pay some or all of the cost of education for employees.
- **The college**. Some colleges have child-care or support groups for returning students. Members often exchange child care. Some colleges help students with special needs such as single parent households and returning women students. Ask admissions or financial aid officers at the colleges you may attend about special programs you might qualify for. You won't know if you are eligible for aid until you ask and apply! Aid is available to students of all ages, not just traditional age (18-22), full-time students.
- **Your community**. Social service organizations or occupation-related groups you may be involved with could offer scholarships.
- **The Hotline**. Call the ICPAC free Hotline and ask for **IS-5**: Finding Money for Your Education or **IS-56**: The ICPAC Guide to Financial Aid for Adult Students. The Hotline can help you find different sources of financial aid. They can even help you fill out any applications or forms that might be needed.
- **The Internet**. Check out the ICPAC Website at *http://icpac.indiana.edu*. There is a free scholarship search service and loads of links to financial aid info.

Special Help for Adult Students

Many colleges have programs and policies that offer special benefits to adults. Ask colleges that you are considering what they have that might benefit you. Some of these advantages include:

Classes that are held at times when adults can conveniently get to them.
These can include classes held in the evenings or on weekends. Some classes also are offered by television satellite or computer at places closer to your home. These classes are called distance education courses. Call the ICPAC Hotline and ask about the **Indiana College Network** and distance education to learn more.

Special Help for Adult Students (continued)

Programs that offer flexibility in attendance schedules and in learning methods.
Flexible programs can save you time and money because you don't have to travel regularly to class on the main campus. Such programs include correspondence classes with lessons either by mail or by computer, interactive TV broadcasts, or independent study and contract learning. They also include classes held at a branch campus and other methods of off-campus study.

Policies that award college credit for what you have already learned at work or on your own.
This can include word processing expertise, knowledge of history, skill with statistics, etc. The credits for learning acquired before you enter a college include

- credit by examination, which tests you for previous independent study or classroom learning; and
- credit for experiential learning, which gives you credit for applied learning done outside a college setting.

Work-study programs...
which enable students to gain career experience while they earn most of their college costs. These programs can help you afford going to college full time.

Unique degree programs...
with coursework and schedules that are designed to meet the special needs of working adult students.

Career counselors...
to help students choose majors, write resumes, and prepare for job interviews.

Special classes...
to work on skills you need to succeed in college.

These include academic skills such as reading comprehension, study habits, test-taking, etc. They also include stress reduction, time management, and communication skills.

Free academic tutoring...
to help you improve your study skills and complete homework assignments you may be having trouble with.

Special Help for Single Parents

Many single parents want more education but fear they will do badly at it. Yet, single parents CAN do very well in college. To help them do so, some colleges have programs aimed at helping single parents. These programs include:

- Services coordinators who work with single parents to ensure that they receive the services they need
- Support groups run by professional counselors
- On campus-child care

For specific programs, call the Hotline and ask for IS-31: Childcare at Indiana Colleges and IS-57: Indiana Single Parent and Displaced Homemaker Programs.

At one two-year college that offers such services, single parents have had a higher GPA and fewer dropouts than the other students. Eighty percent of the students who finished their studies found a job within a few months. Sixteen percent of the graduates went on to a four-year college.

Plan, organize, and DO IT!

Whatever goals you set for yourself in education, whatever your age, you can achieve. It will probably be a lot of work. You will probably feel as though you are on a treadmill at times. But it can also be very rewarding — for yourself, for your career, and for your family. Prepare yourself and your family, and start on the way to a new life.

For more help, call the Hotline and ask for these free publications:

IS-43 ..... The Value of Education — Advice from Two Experts

IS-45 ..... The Dollars and Sense of Education

IS-55 ..... Veteran's Educational Benefit Programs

IS-59 ..... Career Advancement — Should I Return to School?

SS ..... Study Skills Booklet (includes tips on test-taking, taking notes, writing, math, and more)

Call ICPAC and Take Charge of Your Future

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